

AVALON BAY APARTMENTS GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY

(June 20, 2002)

On June 20, 2002, members of the Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council, folks from the surrounding neighborhood, and city officials were pleased to attend the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Avalon at Newton Highlands apartment complex on Needham Street.

This residential complex will forever change what many now feel is the bleak commercial and industrial landscape of Needham Street. When it is completed, sometime next year, the Avalon at Newton Highlands complex will consist of 294 housing units. This will end the many year battle between some members of the community and various potential developers as to what type of development is appropriate for this site.

Formerly the site of the New England Concrete and Pipe company, the 8 acre parcel that will contain the apartment complex has been the source of contention between developers who wished to use it for large scale commercial purposes and certain neighborhood groups, whose concern was that any large scale commercial development would worsen the already intolerable traffic situation along Needham Street. Specifically, the Stop & Shop company had proposed an alternative which would have created an 80,000 square foot supermarket surrounded by about 400 surface parking spaces. This proposal, which was projected to result in approximately 10,000 additional vehicle trips per day along Needham Street, caused concern for members of the surrounding community as well as some Aldermen, and was ultimately abandoned.

Avalon at Newton Highlands will consist of 294 apartments and a 6,400 square foot leasing office/clubhouse that will be housed in two, four-story mid-rise buildings constructed over a single, basement level, enclosed garage located on the driveway surrounding the buildings. The shape of the buildings will define the four landscaped courtyards and esplanade.

Apartments in the complex will feature nine foot ceilings with 6 foot windows on the first three floors, crown molding and chair rail, ceramic tile floors, granite counter tops, breakfast bars, private balconies, full-sized washer and dryers, six panel doors, natural gas stoves, heat and hot water, and central air conditioning. Other optional features include lofts in all of the fourth floor apartments and gas-burning fireplaces. The



6,400 square foot leasing office and clubhouse will contain a billiards room, community kitchen, lounge and fitness room. A children's playroom will be located in the larger



Conceptual Appearance of Avalon at Newton Highlands

building of the complex. An underground garage will provide for most of the parking needs of the new development, as will a number of outside parking spaces.

The complex will also contain four courtyards. The resident lounge opens onto a courtyard with a 1,500 square foot heated pool and spa, decorative trellis, and BBQ area. The esplanade between the two buildings is designed to fit a large function tent. The three courtyards in the larger building will contain a putting green, tot lot, and reading garden. Additional passive and active outdoor recreational areas include the multi-sport court and pet-walking area.

Attending the festivities at the groundbreaking were many members of the surrounding community as well as city officials and members of the Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council.



In the photo are (left to right): Bill McLaughlin, Vice President of Development, AvalonBay; Tom Gleason, Director of Mass Housing; State Senator Cynthia Creem; Mayor David Cohen; Alderman Christine Samuelson; Alderman Carleton Merrill



The groundbreaking was also attended by Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council members Bob Staulo, Anthony Marchese, and Srdjan S. Nedeljkovic. As part of the groundbreaking festivities, Bill MacLaughlin (Vice President of Development, AvalonBay Communities) gave introductory remarks and short speeches were given by Mayor Cohen, welcoming the project to Newton, Tom Gleason, Director of Mass Housing, and Arthur Dion, president of the neighborhood group, Citizens Organized for Responsible Development. Construction of this \$58 million dollar project will continue throughout the summer and is expected to be completed sometime next year.

AvalonBay's Bill McLaughlin with Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council Member Srdjan S. Nedeljkovic

Key features of the Comprehensive Permit for Avalon at Newton Highlands (from the City of Newton Department of Planning and Development)

The AvalonBay complex, which will contain 294 dwelling units, will provide a component of its apartments as affordable housing units. A total of 74 units, or 25% of the total units, will be "affordable," representing the largest new affordable housing initiative in the City of Newton. Of the affordable units, 26 will be for very low income residents, 11 will be for low income residents, and 37 will be moderate income housing units. The anticipated mix of apartments includes 60 three-bedroom units, 139 two-bedroom units, 89 one-bedroom units, and 6 live/work guest suites. The parcel is a 350,200 square foot plot of land which will also include a total of 529 parking stalls, of which 398 will be located in an underground garage and 131 will be surface parking on the site. Two buildings of brick and wood frame construction, which will be four and one-half stories in height, will be built on the site, set back from Needham Street about 47' and 57'.

In addition, the portion of Needham Street that fronts the complex will be reconstructed, as part of the overall reconstruction of Needham Street, with funding from the developer. Other improvements will include improvements in the traffic flow of the site, reconfiguration of the parking situation in front of Skipjack's restaurant, and consideration of a traffic signal at the entrance to the complex across from the intersection of Columbia Road and Needham Street. Two main access roadways will be created: the main one being between McDonald's restaurant (21' wide entrance and 30'

wide exit) and the International Bicycle Store , and the other being adjacent to Skipjack's restaurant (24' wide).

The developer has agreed to allow creation of at least one pedestrian access route from the Elliot Street neighborhood to the Needham Street corridor, pending approval by the MBTA, which owns the Bay Colony rail spur parallel to Needham Street. This pedestrian passage, which would pass through the complex, would allow residents a new pedestrian access to Needham Street from the neighborhoods along Elliot Street, and would allow residents of the complex and other transit users more direct access to the Eliot MBTA Green Line station. In addition, pending approval by abutters, vehicular access will be granted to provide rear circulation parallel to Needham Street at sites such as the McDonald's property and the old Polaroid site (now used as the Honeywell office park). Rear access to the Skipjack's restaurant lot will be granted from the Avalon at Newton Highlands complex and the area fronting Skipjack's is anticipated to be landscaped with the front parking removed and new parking created on either side of the restaurant.